

Statement by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence of Nepal to the United Nations, at the Security Council Meeting on Protecting civilians in the context of peacekeeping operations 2016

10 June 2016

On behalf of the Government of Nepal, I wish to compliment the French presidency of the Security Council this month for holding this debate on the protection of civilians in the context of peacekeeping operations. As a consistent and major troop and police contributor for nearly six decades, my country attaches particular significance to this debate.

In the interest of time, I will deliver an abridged version of my statement; the full version will be available in PaperSmart. While the safety and security of civilians is primarily the responsibility of national Governments, it is also critical to the legitimacy and credibility of United Nations peacekeeping missions, since civilians account for the vast majority of casualties in armed conflicts, often as soft targets.

There is now a greater need for a fine balance between the realities of the field, the principles of peacekeeping and the responsibility of protecting civilians.

Nepali peacekeepers are fully oriented towards protecting civilians, particularly women and girls, during and after conflict. The Nepal Army, Nepal Police and the Armed Police Force Nepal have all integrated United Nations policies regarding the protection of civilians, sexual exploitation and abuse, and protection of human rights into the predeployment training of peacekeepers. Together, we have already started placing investigation officers in every contingent to investigate disciplinary issues, gender-based violence, and sexual exploitation and abuse. In this connection, it is my pleasure to reiterate that Nepal supports the Kigali principles.

Nepal applauds the increasing triangular cooperation between the Security Council, the Secretariat and troop- and police-contributing countries as a key to accomplishing civilian protection mandates. We encourage further reinvigorated synergy between these partners, with all due efforts to ensure that peacekeeping operations are not politicized. The provision of additional resources should be considered a prerequisite — initially, at least at the force-headquarters level — for missions with civilian protection mandates.

Nepali peacekeepers have always believed in building the best possible rapport with the civilian population through community services and other confidence-building measures. Based on our positive experience, the practice may be worth emulating. The safety and security of peacekeepers themselves should be built into mission mandates and the rules of engagement to complement the purpose of civilian protection.

I wish to highlight two practical pitfalls that, in our experience, should always be considered while crafting civilian protection mandates. The first is how to guard against unrealistic expectations that peacekeepers will be able to protect all civilians at all times. This issue comes

to the fore particularly as expectations invariably rise following each successful act of civilian protection. The second pitfall is how far to go for protection and what level to escalate to. There is a very fine line where well-meaning but mismanaged intervention for civilian protection suddenly results in United Nations peacekeepers being perceived as no longer neutral.

The principles and purposes enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations constitute a fundamental plank of Nepal's foreign policy. The Constitution that Nepal adopted last September by over four-fifths majority — by far its most forward-looking, inclusive and democratic ever — both inspires and provides for a national commitment to the cause of international peace, security and prosperity.

Since 1958, Nepal has consistently contributed peacekeepers for the maintenance of international peace and security under the aegis of the United Nations. While Nepali peacekeepers are currently deployed in 15 out of 16 missions, over 122,000 peacekeepers have already completed tours of duty in 42 different missions. Nepal does not hesitate to partake in the most challenging of missions, often in response to urgent requests and never, I might add, with national caveats. With 72 Nepali peacekeepers having made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty, my delegation cannot but feel honoured to join forces with you, Mr. President, and all our partners as we march ahead in this noble endeavour.

I wish to conclude by expressing our gratitude to all peacekeepers deployed in United Nations peacekeeping missions, and by paying tribute to those who have sacrificed their lives for the noble cause of maintaining international peace and security around the world.